



YOUR TIME OFF CAN LEAD TO HEALTHIER TIMES

Furloughs can be stressful. You may worry about the drop in income that comes with the mandatory unpaid days off. You may wonder about what happens if furloughs don't cut costs enough. Will layoffs be the next step? Going through that kind of stress and anxiety is bad for your health, both physically and emotionally.

Are there ways to cope with this? Yes. You can make your time off give your health a boost instead of increasing your health risks. Here are a few suggestions for doing it:

- » Focus on fitness: This advice doesn't mean cramming as much exercise as possible into your day off. That's a bad fitness strategy and could endanger your health. Check with your doctor before beginning any exercise routine. Once you begin, use your time off to:
 - o Develop your own fitness assessments. Take tasks you can do – walk a mile in 20 minutes, ride your bike three miles, put in a session with weight machines, etc. – and note how it affects you. Is it getting easier? If it is, you're making progress. Keep a fitness journal to record this and information such as your weight and waist size.
 - o Try out new activities for your exercise regime. This could be anything from adding to your aerobics repertoire to taking swimming lessons. Variety makes exercise more effective.
 - o Use your day off to do menu planning with health in mind. Then take the time to do careful food shopping, reading nutrition labels and making healthier choices.
- » Learn to relax: You may do this by exploring techniques such as yoga and meditation, perhaps taking a class. Or you may use your time off to learn the art of doing nothing, giving yourself permission to have the stretch of quiet time you find it difficult to make time for.
- » Strengthen your social network: Studies show that having healthy relationships with family and friends promotes emotional health. Sometimes you get too busy with work to tend to those relationships. Use your time off to reconnect. Are your friends and your spouse or partner at work while you're off? Plan something special – an event, an outing, a date – and use your day to put everything together.
- » Volunteer your time to help others: Acts of selflessness can boost your emotional health. Turning your time off into someone else's gain instead of simply seeing it as your loss makes it more positive and, therefore, less stressful.

There are other productive ways of using your furlough time. Thinking about what you can gain from your time off not only stimulates ideas for using the time, it gives you a more positive attitude about the furlough. That positive attitude will help with your morale and productivity. You'll feel better about your time off and your time on.

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